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PREPARATIONS FOR THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: ACTION FOR EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

First draft to serve as a working document for the elaboration of the Platform for Action

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The Commission on the Status of Women, at its thirty-sixth session, acting as preparatory body for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its thirty-seventh session a report containing a first draft to serve as a working document for the elaboration of the Platform for Action. In the report the orientation of the Platform is discussed and a structure proposed for consideration by the Commission.

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INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 36/8, 1/ the Commission on the Status of Women, acting as preparatory body for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its thirty-seventh session a report containing a first draft to serve as a working document for the elaboration of the Platform for Action. In its resolution 35/4, 2/ the Commission had decided to prepare a programme of action for consideration by the World Conference. In its resolution 36/8, it decided to call the document "the Platform for Action", requesting in paragraph 8 that the first draft should take as a basis all the guidelines contained in Commission resolution 35/4, the impact on the status of women of changes that have taken place in the international community, the importance of integrating gender perspectives into policy-making in all areas and at all levels, the need to give priority to the situation of rural women, in particular in developing countries, and differences in priorities among regions, based on a full input from the organizations of the United Nations system, as well as other regional organizations acting through their representatives to the Commission.

2. The present report, which is based on the results of informal interagency consultations, is submitted in accordance with the above and contains proposals regarding the structure of and approach to the Platform.

BASIC APPROACHES TO THE PLATFORM

3. The Fourth World Conference on Women and its preparatory processes should focus world attention on the situation of women and result in a renewal of political commitment. The purpose of the Platform for Action, as the final document to emerge from the Conference, is to accelerate implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women 3/ in order that key aspects may be achieved by the year 2000. It is to delineate specific action to be taken by policy-makers at all levels, as well as by men and women at the grass roots, to rectify current inequalities. The Platform should set out clearly the steps necessary to achieve equality by the twenty-first century.

4. While the Platform will continue to focus on the themes of equality, development and peace, the overlaps between these themes have become so extensive that to treat them separately would entail unnecessary repetition. Since the main intention is to produce a manageable document, the Platform should be approached in a holistic fashion, highlighting the interrelationships between the three themes.

5. The Platform is to be concise and action-oriented and be written in a language that is simple and easily understandable. The types of action proposed should be those that the average woman could undertake or could realistically ask of her political leaders. Consideration must be given to the fact that the Platform should be readily translatable, not only into all the official languages of the United Nations but also into the various national, and perhaps local, languages. This will enhance its efficacy and promote its implementation on the broadest basis possible.

6. With these considerations in mind, it is proposed that the Platform should comprise six sections, as indicated in the outline (see annex), namely: a

visionary statement of purpose; a diagnosis of the current situation of the world's women; an analytic statement of the most significant obstacles to the advancement of women identified in the diagnosis; the key issues and basic needs, linking the status of women to global changes; specific action to be taken to reach obtainable goals in key areas; and a statement about implementation mechanisms.

7. The Commission is invited to agree on the structure of the Platform at its current session in order to allow sufficient time at ensuing sessions to determine the final content of the text of the Platform to the extent possible in advance of the Conference. As the Commission has already decided that the Platform should comprise a limited number of issues and provide concise guidelines, it would also be useful if the Commission could determine at an early stage a maximum length for the final document.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1992, Supplement No. 4 (E/1992/24), chap I, sect. C.

2/ Ibid., 1991, Supplement No. 8 (E/1991/28), chap. I, sect C.

3/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

Annex

DRAFT OUTLINE OF THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION

I. STATEMENT OF MISSION

1. The visionary statement of the underlying principles for the achievement of the goal of equality by the year 2000 is intended to be a strategic manifesto and reflect a political commitment to adopt measures that will accelerate implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women a/ with a view to achieving true equality. It should stress the importance of solidarity between women, as well as partnership between men and women and the equal sharing of power, so as to bring a new ethic into human relationships for the good of society and a better world. Women should be supported and recognized as actors as well as recipients in the development process and the enhanced efficiency and cost-effectiveness of power-sharing in the economic, political and social fields will be emphasized. Women's role in shaping a new development agenda and the linkages between women and other emerging trends, such as governance, democracy and accountability, should be identified.

II. WOMEN IN THE 1990s: A STATUS REPORT

2. A concise, integrated diagnosis of the status of women at the time of the Conference should be based on the analysis underlying the second review and appraisal of the implementation of the Strategies. The issue of equity between women and men should be linked to the implementation of international agreements on sustainable development as well as an identification of current disparities between the sexes. In this context, the findings of the expert group meetings on women and development and women in extreme poverty, held in November 1991 and November 1992 respectively, should be taken into account.

III. OBSTACLES TO FULL EQUALITY

3. An analysis of the current situation should determine what obstacles represent a persistent disadvantage to women everywhere and thus require immediate attention. As some factors will be seen to affect women in different ways depending on their situation, a common denominator should be sought to connect the inequalities and obstacles that are the lot of women all over the world.

IV. KEY ISSUES AND BASIC NEEDS OF WOMEN IN THE 1990s

4. In this section, the areas should be identified in which increased participation by women would facilitate their integration into all spheres of life; the basic necessities, such as health, education and employment, that would enable women to take advantage of all the opportunities available to them in a changing political, economic and social climate, should be clearly spelt out. There should be an in-built population component covering urbanization, ageing, migration and fertility control. The "empowerment" of women, the changing gender roles of men, and any other major priority issues that might emerge from the review and appraisal should be emphasized, as well as the nine points listed in paragraph 3 of Commission resolution 35/4, b/ namely:

(a) The strengthening of efforts at the national and international levels, taking into account the circumstances in each country, to increase awareness among men and women of women's rights under international conventions and national law;

(b) The implementation of special measures to increase the proportion of women involved in decision-making in the economic, social and political spheres;

(c) The strengthening of worldwide efforts to end illiteracy among women and girls by the year 2000;

(d) The establishment of specific programmes for improving the conditions of women and girls living in poverty, particularly those living in extreme poverty, by, inter alia, providing adequate training to develop their skills and capabilities;

(e) The establishment of specific programmes aimed at improving women's and girls' health by ensuring them access to adequate maternal health care, family planning and nutrition;

(f) The implementation of policies to prevent, control and reduce violence against women and girls in the family, the workplace and society;

(g) The establishment or strengthening of national institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women;

(h) The establishment of special programmes aimed at meeting the specific needs of refugee, displaced and migrant women and girls and those living in conflict areas;

(i) The elaboration of ways and means of using new and high technologies, as well as scientific research, to benefit women.

V. ACTION TOWARDS 2000

5. On the basis of the key and emerging issues and obstacles identified, goals should be established. Selected, realistic and quantifiable targets should be specified, including the development of indicators to measure the quality of life. Concise guidelines for the achievement of each of the goals should be provided. In cases where goals already exist, these could be revised or reinforced as appropriate and stress laid on their speedy implementation. It should also be quite clear to whom the recommendations are addressed.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION: KEEPING TRACK OF PROGRESS

6. A monitoring and implementation mechanism should be built into the document. An appropriate allocation of resources should be committed to the implementation of the Platform.

Notes

a/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

b/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1991, Supplement No. 8 (E/1991/28), chap. I, sect. C.